THE YOUNGEST MARRIED COUPLE IN THE UNITED STATES.

A LAD of sixteen and a lass of fifteen, who lived in the South, loved each other.

Now, when you begin at this point and look at the matter calmly you are bound to make great allowance for everything that could possibly happen. They were young, they lived in the South and they loved each other—and there you have all the elements of as pretty a romance as the imagination could create. Add to it reality, and, lo! what would you not forgive them?

Here in New York the story, when it

appeared in outline in the newspapers, caused people to smile and murmur:

"How pretty!"

But in the State where it happened hundreds of thousands of people gossiped about it for days and debated it seriously and took sides—some approvingly, others deploring it.

They had eloped and had been made man and wife! There lay the romance of it.

She was the daughter of a wealthy merchant; he was the son of the Governor of the State. There came the sensation! And now that you may enjoy the romance and be able to form your own opinion upon the merits of the case and place your sympathies either with the loving couple he took his boy into office with him, intending to bring him up in the ways of statecraft.

The lad was bright and quick to learn. There is no place in the routine of Capitol work for an exuberance of boyish spirits, and young John Atkinson soon became a or with their parents, here you have the whole story:

The youthful lover and husband was John P. Atkinson, son of the Governor of Georgia. Last February—according to his father—he was sixteen years old. When the elder Atkinson was elected Governor very serious minded boy. The companionship of grown men taught him a great deal about the earnest side of life, and the result was that he soon imagined that he had grown to man's estate.

He became his father's private secretary and received a salary of $75 a month, a factor which did more than anything else to give him a feeling of complete independence. Men who were thrown in contact with him liked him exceedingly, for he was as modest as he was bright. He was considered to be intelligent and experienced far beyond his years, and was treated with the respect that would have been accorded to a man ten years his senior. Governor Atkinson, however, knew that his son was still a boy, and never, for a moment, did he relax his parental vigilance.

One of the solid business men of the city of Atlanta is Charles P. Byrd. He had started at the bottom of the ladder and had worked himself up to a high and honorable position in the community. He married a daughter of Mary E. Bryan, the noted writer of Southern romances, and his one child, Ada, was his idol. The Byrds lived two blocks from the Governor's mansion on the fashionable thoroughfare of the city. When the present Governor was inaugurated, two years ago, Ada was thirteen years old. Southern girls, as everybody knows, develop rapidly in comparison with their Northern sisters, and little Miss Byrd, in addition to appearing fifteen and even more, was bright and possessed of mental powers beyond her years.

It was nearly two years ago that young Atkinson first met Miss Byrd. They were both present at a children's party, and as soon as they saw each other they fell in love.

After the manner of children, they loved with an impetuosity and recklessness by the side of which the passion of Romeo and Juliet paled and seemed cold. Young Atkinson became as devoted a cavalier as his sweetheart would permit. They built their castles of air and planned their futures, and when any doubts arose upon the subject of parental approbation young Atkinson thrust them aside majestically and declared:

"I'll marry you anyway."

For a year they played at lovers. Ada was still in school, but John found many opportunities to see her. The parents of both saw that they were much together, but, pshaw! they were mere children! But there, you see, is where they made their great mistake. In matters of love there is neither childhood nor age.

Young Atkinson had not been in his father's office long before he developed a dignity and seriousness which made him years older than the rollicking schoolboy he had been a few short months before. He played at being a man. As he did in business affairs so he did in his love making. With a practical side to his sentimental nature, he looked up the marriage laws of the State and—began to save money. And with John's serious love making a change came over Miss Ada. She was no longer a child in thought, but a woman. She was willing, nay anxious, to wed, and they agreed to seize the first favorable opportunity.

But happiness is a poor secret. Miss Ada told her dearest girl friend, who in turn—but there you are. Eventually it reached the ears of her father, who communicated the facts to the Governor, and together they established a careful watch upon the youthful sweethearts. They also endeavored to argue the matter, but logic fails where love pleads. The Governor even threatened, but John said, stubbornly:

"I'll marry her anyway."

Likewise did Miss Ada refuse to be comforted with promises of what might happen in years to come. She did not care a fig if they could be married in five years, or even four or three or two. They wanted to wed now.

Despite the fact that they were forbidden to communicate with each other, they not only wrote to each other, but met often. They planned an elopement, but their plans were watched and went awry. Miss Byrd was sent to her grandmother's home, near Cartersville. John received a long and serious talk from his father. He listened in respectful silence, but when it was over his teeth came together with a snap and an expression of dogged determination came into his eyes as he said:

"I'll marry her anyway."

For two weeks nothing occurred. On the morning of March 30 the Governor left for a tour of inspection through the State. He thought his boy safe in Atlanta with Miss Byrd fifty miles away. But he reckoned without fully measuring his son's ardor.

Master John was a wise general. When he planned the first elopement he had also laid contingent plans for a second. Miss Byrd knew that if the first laid plans went wrong she would be exiled to her grandmother's country place. And for this they had made arrangements.

On the afternoon that his father left Atlanta young Atkinson drew $120 from the State Treasurer and left word for his mother that he was going to Griffin. As the boy had relatives there she had no suspicion of his real motive for leaving the city. He was accompanied by a boy friend, and together they went to the little country town where his sweetheart was exiled. With the cunning of an older Romeo young Atkinson went to the house before the family had arisen and entered into diplomatic conversation with the servants. He learned that the young lady was there, and he hastily drove back to his hotel. There he wrote a note appointing a place of meeting, which his friend undertook to deliver. In the meantime another messenger was scurrying to the Ordinary's office for the necessary license.

The note was delivered and in due time the license arrived. Then Atkinson and his friend met the girl and together they drove to a justice of the peace, where the ceremony was performed.

In the mean time both the Governor and Mr. Byrd had heard of the elopement and were doing their utmost to prevent the marriage. The Governor telegraphed to the police of every city in the State to which his son could have possibly gone and begged them to arrest him. The whole State was flooded with telegrams offering a reward to any one who would apprehend either of the couple before the marriage ceremony occurred.

One bright detective thought he had earned the reward. He was standing in the railroad depot at Rome watching the passengers alighting from a train that had just arrived. He espied a youthful couple who answered the description that had been sent out and promptly stopped them.

"Is this Mr. Atkinson?" he asked.

"That's right," responded the young man, promptly.

"I have authority from your father to arrest you," said the detective. The young man smiled.

"You're too late," he said. "We've been married. This lady is now my wife."

This, of course, robbed the detective of his reward, but nevertheless he accompanied the couple to their hotel and kept them under arrest until their parents arrived.

The first train from Atlanta brought the distracted parents of the young people.

The first thing they did was to take their children home. Then they scolded, stormed, threatened and pleaded with them. Mr. Byrd was heartbroken. He begged his daughter to think no more of her young lover—at least, not until she was through with her school. The girl, however, merely said she would stay away from her husband only as long as her father kept her imprisoned in the house. At the first opportunity she would rejoin him.

The young husband was equally obdurate. He explained to his father his unalterable intention of possessing the girl as his wife, and said that nothing in the world could prevent him. And the Governor was finally forced to yield.

There was a long conference between the two fathers, and it was agreed that the young wife should return to school and spend one more year. If at the expiration of that time their love remained unaltered and undiminished, they will be allowed to live together.

Upon his return to Atlanta with his son the Governor said to an intimate friend:

"It is a very serious affair. While I am crushed, he is my son, and my arms are around him and will remain there. I have always been ambitious for him, and the advantages given him have made him believe he is a man, while he is only a child. I take him home to-night, and Mr. Byrd will take his daughter. He will go to my house and she to her father. Later I will announce my course.

"Under the law of Georgia a boy under seventeen cannot contract marriage. My son is only sixteen. He was sixteen February last."

All that young Atkinson had to say was:

"Oh, well, what is done can't be undone. I love Ada and she loves me, and we have wanted to get married for a long time. I was not going to make another failure. We had the whole thing planned before Ada left Atlanta."

"I feel as if I had been through a football game the last few days. I am not as young as they say I am, nor is my wife. I am seventeen and she is fifteen."

On that point the bridegroom and his father differ slightly.

ANOTHER BRITON AIRS HIS REMARKABLE VIEWS ON AMERICA.

ANOTHER observing foreigner has written a book about us. This time he is an Englishman, G. W. Stevens by name, and his observations are published under the title, "The Land of the Dollar." He came to this country as a newspaper correspondent shortly before the last Presidential election.

Mr. Steevens is original and often entertaining. His book is eminently readable. It is free from the usual mistake of Englishmen who criticise everything American because it is different from something English. He makes plenty of mistakes, but they are amusing and not pigheaded. He sees much in this country to praise and more to marvel at.

Here is his first impression of New York:

"On the first morning I got up and went to my eighth-story window. New York was spread out in bright sunshine below. Never have I seen a city more hideous or more splendid. Uncouth, formless, piebald, chaotic, it yet stamps itself upon you as the most magnificent embodiment of Titanic energy and force.

"The foreground of my picture was a lightning conductor, sweeping down from some dizzy unimagined height aslant to the street below. Beneath was a wing of the Waldorf; on the left a deep, silent courtyard, whence some pittance of air and light filtered into the lower floors; on the right a huge skeleton of iron girders that is to fill out into yet another gigantic branch of this gigantic hotel. Beyond lay the red, flat, sloping roofs of two streets of houses, four or five storied, with trees struggling up to the light between them, this might have been a bit of Bloomsbury.

"Beyond these, shutting out the direct front, rose to double their height the great, square, dirty white and yellow back of a huge Broadway store; the blind-looking windows and outside iron stairs contradicted the comfortable Bloomsbury streets with a suggestion of overcrowding and squalor. To the right of this, half covered with creepers, a little church cocked a squat Gothic spire at heaven. To the left was a peep of Broadway, with cable cars ceaselessly gliding to and fro; right on top of them, as it seemed, the trains of the elevated road puffed and rattled in endless succession.

"Just over the iron fretwork peeped a little blue shop and a little red shop, side by side; elbowing them, a big, greenish theatre, and beyond that again a great, white block of business houses, with a broad blue band of advertisements across its dead side. Emerging above that, another street; beyond that, another square block of windows, a clock tower, then in a shapeless brown jumble the city stretches away out to the steely band of the Hudson and the pale green hills of New Jersey beyond.

"Walk downtown toward the business quarter—if one part is the business quarter any more than another. The impression is everywhere the same. The very buildings cry aloud of struggling, almost savage, unregulated strength. No street is laid out as part of a system, no building as an architectural unit, in a street. Nothing is given to beauty; everything centres in hard utility. It is the outward expression of the freest, fiercest individualism. The very houses are alive with the instinct of competition, and strain each one to overtop its neighbors. Seeing it, you can well understand the admiration of an American for something ordered and proportioned for the Rue de Rivoli or Regent street. Fine buildings, of course, New York has in every pure and cross-bred architecture under the sun. Most of them are suggestions of the Italian Renaissance, as is the simple yet rich and stately Produce Exchange, built of terra cotta and red brick of a warmer and yet less impudent red than ours. In this lives the spirit of the best Florentine models. Fifth avenue is lined with such fine buildings—here rococo, there a fine Gothic cathedral; then again, a hint of Byzantine or a dainty suggestion of Mauresque."

This Englishman thinks that London has much to learn from New York. This is the introduction to his remarks on this subject:

"If I get back unlynched to England, I intend to organize a movement for sending all the members of the London County Council to New York. If they return without learning a good deal as to how a city should be organized on the material side, I should then send them somewhere else. Take, for example, the communications within the city: they are infinitely ahead of anything ever dreamed of in London."

Speaking of American money, he says incidentally:

"As for the cent, it is a mere irresponsible piece of childishness like the farthing. The fact that the Americans will produce indispensable newspapers for only one cent, which in some respects I feel strongly worthy of admiration, but adds a complication to life which it might be well to spare."

Boston appears to him a more comfortable place than New York, but provincial.

"Boston is fringed with wooden houses, but the interior is more substantial. You are struck immediately with its decent, comparatively English air, as contrasted with New York. The houses have not shot up and gone to seed: they preserve an even sky line, and you see whole terraces built on a single plan.

"Not but what Boston possesses features of useful ugliness, which even New York lacks. The tram cars, for instance, which all go by electricity, have sticking up from the roof of each an inclined rod rather like the long leg of an easel, which runs along a wire overhead. The effect of these wires, together with a crowd of others in the telegraph or telephone services, is as if a gigantic spider had spun a web low down over every street, and was waiting somewhere on the roofs to pounce on any Bostonian who should invent a flying machine and endeavor to fly through."

Again he speaks of the Bean City:

"That which lifts Boston from a busy, rather unimpressive provincial town into an example to the world is the system of its public parks. They are not finished yet—nothing in America is, except some of the politicians—but when they are they will be a rare monument of wise and generous civic spirit."

The most interesting of all the chapters in "The Land of the Dollar" will appear to many to be that in which the author endeavors to depict the American national character. Here are some extracts from it:

"He does not look like an Englishman, yet it is manifest at sight that he cannot be of any other known breed of man. He talks English—often as if he were trying to imitate Mr. Eugene Stratton, often with a clarity of pronunciation that put me again and again to shame. When I was dictating to a typewriter and she could not understand what I said—when at last she caught the word and repeated it—I wondered why I could not make a vowel sound with the same distinctness and purity. Yet that typewriter could not spell; for the American, as I have hinted, is a nation of but superficial education.

"But the essential difference which new environment has grafted into the English stock strikes deeper than appearance and language. If I am asked to give it a name, it is hard to find one. The American is a highly electric Anglo-Saxon. His temperament is of quicksilver. There is as much difference in vivacity and emotion between him and an Englishman as there is between an Italian and an Englishman. Yet, curiously enough, there is just as much difference between him and the Italian. His emotion is not the least like that of the Southern European; for behind the flash of his passion there shines always the steady light of dry, hard, practical reason. Shrewd, yet excitable; hot-hearted and cool-headed, he combines the northern and the southern temperaments, and yet is utterly distinct from either. He has developed into a new sort of Anglo-Saxon, a new national character, a new race.

"The keynote of this character is its irresistible impulse to impress all its sentiments externally by the crudest and most obvious medium. The Americans are the most demonstrative of all the people of the earth.

"Everything must be brought to the surface, embodied in a visible, palpable form. For a fact to make any effect on the American mind it must be put in a shape where it can be seen, heard and handled. If you want to impress your fellows you must do it not through their reasoning powers, but through the five senses of their bodies.

"I noticed it first in connection with their way of conducting an election. A hundred thousand men are going to vote for McKinley; that is nothing. Put your hundred thousand men down in Broadway so that we can see them marching, hear them shouting; then we will begin to appreciate the fact. And the more you give us to see and hear in the way of banners and bands the more we shall appreciate it.

"The demonstrative nature of the race, only discovered in this respect, soon appeared a master key which would unlock most of the puzzles in the American. The most patriotic of men, his patriotism seems always to centre rather on his flag than on his country; he can see the flag, but he can't see the country. Why does he cover his person with childish buttons and badges? Because you can see them and you can't see the sentiments in his mind. Why does he cling all his life to the title of some rank or office he held twenty years ago? You can hear the title pronounced, but you can't see the history of his life. A man's self is no good unless he can put a big legible label on it.

"Thus, again, they will not intrust their goods to anybody without receiving a check—something you can see and jingle in your pocket. They do not read Shakespeare, but would think it almost a sin to visit England without seeing Shakespeare's house.

"In business they are the most unwearied and ingenious advertisers in the world. In dress they appear vain, but have just the same reverence for the concrete and indifference to the abstract. No nation in the world is in such bondage to fashion as democratic America. Her men and women, young and old, wear boots that narrow to a sharp point, like skates, two inches beyond the toes; they tinker at their faces with complexion washes and nose machines as zealously as some people in England tinker at their souls. But the extremest case I met of the appeal to the concrete was a lawsuit in which parents claimed damages for an assault on their child. A kick had brought on necrosis of the bone, and the necrosised bone was duly produced in court and handed round among the jury. That settled it. There was plenty of medical evidence as to the cause of death, but all this weighed as nothing to the sight and feel of the accusing bone.

"It is in this sense that the Americans may fairly be called the most materialistic people of the world. Materialistic in the sense of being avaricious, I do not think they are; they make money, as I have said, because they must make something, and there is nothing else to make. But materialistic, in the sense that they must have all their ideas put in material form, they unquestionably are."

Mr. Steevens praises the American man for his treatment of women.

"In one virtue these men furnish a shining example to all the world—in their devoted chivalry toward their women. They toil and slave, they kill themselves at forty, that their women may live in luxury and become socially and intellectually superior to themselves.

"On the other side of the picture is the American attitude to children and to the old. With children they are merely foolishly indulgent, thus producing an undisciplined, conceited and ignorant youth. No American is fit to talk to until he is thirty, and he retains all his life a want of discipline and an incapacity for ordered and corporate effort. The individual may be the fresher and stronger for it, but it is not productive of good government.